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SEStran - developing a new Regional Transport Strategy survey April 2021

Spokes - The Lothian Cycle Campaign is pleased to response to preliminary SEStran Regional Transport Survey (RTS), where we also include some topics not addressed in it, but which might usefully be included in the draft RTS in the autumn.

Our principal message is that it is very important that the benefits from the large increases in active travel during the lock-downs are not lost.

We have some specific observations, but have not gone into great detail as these topics will generally be well known to you. However, if you have any questions or would like further detail please let us know:

1. High quality cross-boundary active travel links are often the last to happen, yet are often very important and this needs addressing. Local cross-boundary urgent requirements include:

- Portobello – Musselburgh
- Little France – Shawfair
- Edinburgh – Dalkieth
- Edinburgh – Penicuik
- Balerno – Kirknewton and East Calder
- Edinburgh - Queen Margaret University
- Queensferry – Winchburgh (plus extra threat by proposed new M9 junction)

2. None of *City of Edinburgh's Spaces for People* (SfP) schemes are cross-boundary, or even reach CEC boundaries. Although CEC cooperated with *East Lothian Council* and *Sustrans* to agree a SfP Portobello to Musselburgh scheme, this has unfortunately now been dropped.

3. All of the active travel routes across the City Bypass need improving, with most being cross-boundary

4. Inappropriate emphasis continues on trunk road spending continues in the face the climate emergency. Local examples with a cross-boundary relevance include:

- Proposed Sherrifhall roundabout rebuild is the wrong spending priority, but a good quality active travel crossing still needed!
- Proposed new M9 motorway junction to serve new housing in Winchburgh is to be built and opened **before** the new railway station is built and opened! More [here](#).

5. The Forth Road Bridge has enormous unrealised potential as cross-boundary active travel link. Currently, it is poorly managed for active travel with pedestrians and cyclists commonly required to share one side pathway only, for travel in both directions.

6. E-bikes are not mentioned in the survey, yet they will be very important and significant driver for modal shift, including for longer commuting - which cross-boundary travel often is. Also, any proposed incentive schemes for motorists changing to e-cars should also include trading in fossil fuelled cars for an e-bike.

7. Cycle carriage capacity on trains is very important, including cross-boundary. Currently, this has recently improved on some local services with new electric rolling stock, though capacity problems remain on the Borders Railway diesel trains. Unfortunately there are significant problems on longer distance trains, where provision has been both reduced and become less accessible, on both ScotRail HSTs (see [here](#) from 2017, but still unchanged) and LNER Azumas.

8. Active travel links to Scottish railway stations remains poor because it is largely ignored by Network Rail and local authorities lack funding.

9. Integrated ticketing with other public transport and fairer pricing when compared with frozen fuel duty for motorists, is long overdue. 5-day season tickets are likely to become obsolete post-pandemic as partial home-working increases, as will the often arbitrary distinctions between peak and off-peak fare structures.

10. Rail routes, stations and service frequency:

- In the longer term, we agree completely that more rail routes, more stations and new build "short cuts" (ie to shorten the railway distance to Perth) are all good, as would be further speeding up the rail electrification programme.
- In the medium term, we welcome the plans to open stations at East Linton and Reston. We would also like to see sections of the Borders rail doubled to ease the current operational constraints.
- In the short term, we would like to see service frequencies increased to half hourly between Edinburgh and both North Berwick and Dunbar.

11. Public bike hire schemes are now available in Edinburgh, East Lothian and Mid Lothian. Unfortunately, these are currently independent schemes and therefore unavailable for cross-boundary use. This is something that should be addressed and where *SEStran* could play a useful coordination role.

12. The potential for a public transport ferry link Leith - Kirkcaldy is not included in the Survey, but could usefully form part of an integrated cross-border network, especially as the Edinburgh tram network will soon run through Leith Docks

13. The cross-boundary *Borders Bus* with cycle carriage service from Edinburgh to Peebles and Melrose and the *Ember Electric Bus* service with cycle carriage from Edinburgh to Perth and Dundee are both warmly welcomed. Other routes, especially where there is no train service, could usefully be assessed and encouraged. Edinburgh to Biggar, Kelso or Jedburgh would be valuable useful complements to the Borders Railway.

14. The valuable potential for Edinburgh tram network to be extended to Dalkeith and Penicuik should be assessed. This may, unfortunately, be harder to deliver because it would be cross-boundary investment, yet would remove the current requirement for a large number of slow bus journeys and promote modal shift.

15. Reminder that non-standard bikes (including disability adapted bikes and trikes, hand cycles, tandems and cargo bikes) and user accessibility must always be included in cycling schemes.

Ewan Jeffrey, for Spokes Planning Group.
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